



American Legion's 49th Annual Washington Conference Remarks

Tuesday, 3 March 2009



General Norty Schwartz



Thank you for that kind introduction. It is truly an honor to be here with this impressive group of warriors. I have the highest respect for your service, and I thank you for all you've done and continue to do on behalf of the Armed Forces and America. It is a pleasure to join you in celebrating the fine tradition of the American Legion. Let us remember those who could not join us here, and never forget those warriors and their families who have gone before. The future of our Nation's defense depends upon our service in that distinguished heritage, and we do well to remember the magnitude of their sacrifice.

Let there be no doubt--we, in your Air Force, are "all in" and ready to "double down" in the face of adversity. Our priority is to partner with the Joint and Coalition team to win today's fight. And our Nation's Airmen are fully committed to helping do just that. We are taking every feasible initiative to serve as a trustworthy partner in delivering game-changing capabilities with precision and reliability. Whether it is serving alongside ground forces in convoys or in Joint Terminal Attack Controller roles, or providing game-changing Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance capabilities with unmanned aerial vehicles, or helping our wounded warriors with life-saving medical care and aeromedical evacuation, or providing rapid and precise strike capabilities in counterinsurgency or close air support roles, hear me loud and clear when I say that we are all in. This is our priority as an Air Force.

And our Airmen know exactly what must be done and how to do it in a way that works for our brothers and sisters in arms. Because, in short, this game is all about trust--and we build that trust in a way that can be summed up with a word: Performance. We will deliver on our promise as a reliable partner, and we will prove our priorities with our performance.

We have Airmen in the fight today continuing this effort. They are both fighting and supporting the fight every day. I could not be more proud of our Airmen, and you need to know that no Airman measures his or her worth by their proximity to the fight. Everyone counts, everyone contributes. No job or specialty is more worthy than another because it takes all of us playing our respective positions to be successful. Today there are 33,000 Airmen deployed to contingencies across the globe--28,000 to the CENTCOM theater in 63 locations, and over 90,000 sorties over the past year in Iraq and Afghanistan. We fly over 300 sorties every day "over" Iraq and Afghanistan, and 900-plus airlift sorties worldwide. We will be there when our



teammates need us. We are committed to this task. It is our priority as America's Air Force to deliver on this promise.

And that is the big picture we are focused on in the Air Force. We have more to do in other priority areas, too. Like reinvigorating our nuclear enterprise, developing and caring for our Airmen and their families, especially our wounded warriors, and modernizing our aging inventories with the highest degree of acquisition excellence. But I want you to know we are fully committed to winning today's fight. Our Airmen proudly step forward each and every day to say "Send Me." And together we will deliver on the promise we all made when we raised our hands and uttered our oath.

All of us have one very important commonality between us as stewards of America's warrior ethos. We can look around the Nation today and see our society is struggling with some issues vital to our identity as a nation. The American people struggle today with a crisis of confidence--from the integrity of our financial institutions, to issues in public education, to the viability of our health care system--even to issues underlying the very trust we expect in our governing processes. The issue of trustworthiness could not be timelier or more critical. It is up to us in uniform, both serving and retired, to take our portion of these concerns off America's consciousness. The Nation has enough on its mind without worrying about the integrity of those who serve or have served in our common defense. That's why our shared heritage is so vitally important. The U.S. Armed Services have a rich heritage of selfless service, those have served and those who are serving. America can be proud of our shared tradition of devotion and service to the highest standards of performance. Thanks to everyone here for your service, in uniform or out, and for allowing me to join you today. For allowing me to share with you the pride of my Service, and the pride we all share, and all Americans share, in those who have served in uniform throughout our rich history. Thank you.